

Austrian iconoclast Gustav Klimt (1862 – 1918) triumphed over childhood poverty to significantly influence the Viennese Secession and Art Nouveau movement. Klimt's elaborate, explicitly sensual works expressed themes of regeneration, love and death, and incorporated Egyptian, Classical Greek, Byzantine and Medieval styles. Klimt also utilized symbols representing art's liberation from traditional culture. Laying the groundwork for Art Deco and Modernism, Klimt's creative influence can still be seen in today's art, decorations and jewelry.

Posters of Klimt's paintings on display: (Periodicals Room, left to right)

CHURCH IN UNTERACH ON THE ATTERSEE (Library Gallery 1)

Klimt painted around 50 landscapes. In the 1890's he spent his summers painting the landscape in Attersee. Because of his intensity, and outdoor painting process, the locals called Klimt 'Waldschrat', or Forest Demon.

Notice the flattened space, refined design, and unmistakable patterning that characterize his work. Also, Klimt preferred to use large square canvases, usually between 30-40 inches each side. Although

these were mostly painted outdoors, a large amount of refinement was done in the studio.

WOMAN WITH A FAN (1917-18)

(Library Gallery 2)

This was one of the two paintings found on easels in Klimt's studio at the time of his death. Of the two, this was the finished painting. The woman is exotically dressed, against a background of birds and flowers, stylized in an Oriental manner. This painting bears a relationship with another exotic painting of Klimt's, *The Friends*.

VIALE ALBERATO (1912) (Avenue of Trees in the Park at Schloss-Krammer)

(Library Gallery 3)

Van Gogh's impact on Klimt's landscape work makes its most powerful statement here. Gustav Klimt painted **Avenue in the Park of Krammer Castle in 1912**. As such, it is among the later works of Gustav Klimt, done in the time after his association with the Vienna Secession and after his Golden Period. The painting depicts the tree lined avenue leading down to Krammer Castle. The trees and green at the top though their naked brown limbs are very visible further down. At the end of the avenue we see the yellow building of Castle Krammer. The castle is covered by a red roof.

The painting is somewhat unusual for Klimt in that there is a lack of obvious symbols in the painting. While some meaning could be laid in the way the naked arms of the trees reach up, the painting is in fact a much more traditional paintings that earlier works of Klimt. It is a landscape depiction of the road leading to the castle. Indeed, aside from the lack of heavy brush strokes, it is almost Van Gogh like in its depiction, and offers more of a post-impressionistic angle than in most other works by Klimt.

Avenue in the Park of Krammer Castle can today be found at the Belvedere in Vienna.

TREE OF LIFE (1909) (Library Gallery 4)

It connects the three worlds surrounding man; those are The Underworld, The Earth, and The Heavens. Its roots are deep into the earth, probably signifying that for life to be sustained, Mother Nature must be involved. The roots then come up to the aboveground and meet into forming the tree's trunk that is on the earth. The tree's branches extent to the heavens, and have various type of fruits and flowers on them. These fruits symbolize that life can be born from the tree.

Death is also symbolized on the tree by the black bird that sits on one of the branches. A black bird has the same meaning in many religions worldwide, even in current African beliefs it is considered as a death sign in many cultures. In real life, the tree has been linked to the many virtues of man, which include strength, wisdom, and beauty. The tree's roots symbolize the man's 'roots' to his home, with many cultures and beliefs being that man come from soil and will return to it eventually. The branches signify the man's way of life in trying to reach out for more possibilities as in friendship and wealth. The fruits and flowers are in line with man's reproduction.

FIELD OF POPPIES (1907)

(Library Gallery 5)

"Field of Poppies" shows the flowers in full bloom, almost hovering in the foreground, with a tremendous backdrop of the sky behind. The sun is rising well off in the distance and has turned the sky a pale yellowish blue. It is one of Klimt's few landscapes to present a long perspective and deep horizon. Indigenous to the Northern Hemisphere, the poppy generally has flowers with one per stem. In this exquisite work, the viewer sees the red flowers blooming all over the rolling hills with huge trees in the background. They are generally grown in red, orange, pink, and white and are, in fact, an edible flower. Growing between 4-6 petals, the red version of the flower has served as a symbol of the tragedy of all who died in World War I, as they are quite common in Europe.

APPLE TREE (1912) (Extended Gallery 6)

This shows an apple tree full of red fruit and green leaves. Growing below the tree are many wildflowers. This painting is suffused with nuanced color and is among Klimt's most meditative paintings.

FOREST OF BEECH TREES (1902) (Extended Gallery 7)

This painting shows a thick grove of beech trees that almost blot out the sky and light in the distance. This was Klimt's view of a perfect beech forest.

Although many of his landscapes were finished in the studio, all were begun in the open air.

This is one of several paintings Klimt made of a beech wood. There is sky, but it is unreachable, imprisoned behind the bars of tree trunks.

Klimt produced only a few woodland paintings. This one shares in the ideas of French impressionism and is dominated by the brown and gray tones of the dried leaves of the forest floor.

CHURCH IN UNTERACH ON THE ATTERSEE (DETAIL) (Extended Gallery 8) See information above.

FARMERS GARDEN WITH CRUCIFIX (1911-12) (Extended Gallery 9)

Farm Garden with Crucifix is a vintage Victorian Era Symbolism fine art religious painting featuring a nature scene with a variety of flowers surrounding a crucifix in a garden on a farm. Klimt painted few religious subjects. This painting was destroyed by fire at Immendorf Palace in 1945.

On May 7 1945, an SS unit arrived at Immendorf Castle in southern Austria. That morning, German forces in Austria had signed their surrender, to take effect the next day.

Schloss Immendorf was a beautiful setting. It contained 13 paintings by Gustav Klimt. According to a 1946 police report, the SS officers "held orgies all night in the castle apartments".

The next day, the SS unit laid explosives in the castle's four towers and walked out. One man went back and lit a fuse, and a tower burst into flames. As

the fire spread, explosives in the other towers detonated. Schloss Immendorf burned for days. Nothing survived of its interior, and the gutted shell was later demolished. According to the eyewitness reports that reached Vienna months later not a single work of art survived.

FARMHOUSE AT KRAMMER (1901) (Extended Gallery 10)

Klimt's mature style shows richly decorative surface patterning.

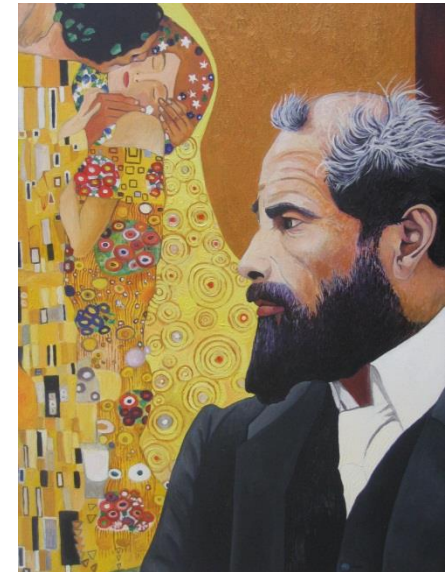


Klimt as a person was something of an enigma. He did not keep a diary or make remarks about his work, but he did leave an undated statement:

"I can paint and draw. ... Only two things are certain. 1) I have never painted a self-portrait. I am less interested in myself as a subject for painting than I am in other people, above all women. But other subjects interest me even more. I am convinced that I am not particularly interesting as a person. There is nothing special about me. I am a painter who paints day after day from morning until night. Figures and landscapes, portraits less often. 2) I have the gift of neither the spoken nor the written word, especially if I have to say something about myself or my work. Whoever wants to know something about me -- as an artist, the only notable thing -- ought to look carefully at my pictures and try to see in them what I am and what I want to do."

Gustav Klimt: Austrian Painter

A Celebration
of the
150th Anniversary
of the Artist's Birth
1862 - 2012



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